10: d'Orleans--311 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 586, 593, 627, 684, 837

"Adultery with a married woman, which is of very rare occurrence, entails a fine of 200 rupees; but, after having been very gay in their youth, husband and wife generally settle down quietly, the former often taking it out of his wife for her unceremonious treatment of him beforehand. I happened, while walking about the town one morning, to witness one of these little family scenes. A woman was shrieking and crying because her husband had been beating her, and when I came to question the pair, the man complained that his wife, who had been out to market, had not returned by nine o'clock to get his breakfast ready, so she must have stopped to gossip on the way. Her answer was that she had not heard the gong strike the hour, that she had not stopped on the way home, and that there was no reason why she should have had a beating. The quarrel was eventually made up without having recourse to a divorce, which, though legally recognised, is rarely resorted to."

23: Franck--258-259 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 586

"The code of Laos allows the woman a divorce without contest if the husband stays away from her longer than the length of time he said he would when he left. What an importation this would be in our civilized West! One might fancy that it would make the men of Laos more punctual, more aware of the value of time, than the subway [259] victims of our great metropolis. Yet it is not so, far from so. The lieutenant contended that this is a very just law, for the suffering of the woman from long absence, whetted by the uncertainty of the return, is obviously more than she can stand, more than she should be expected to stand."

25: Brodrick--106 [3] S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 562, 586, 883

"Laotian women seem never to have been parked and compressed into any sort of seclusion. Divorce is easy and a manner of seeking it was most charmingly civilized. If a husband had reason to think that his wife did not like him, he placed flowers upon her pillow. If she could still tolerate him, or if she had not any new plans, then she left the flowers untouched for three days. If she desired to get rid of her man, she threw the flowers away, whereupon he walked out and got a divorce.

And at the Love Courts, the phousao and the phoubao, the girls and the boys are free and equal, at least as far as the conventions rule."

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Polygamy. Although polygamy is not the rule in Laos, it is sanctioned by custom, and the only limits as to the number of wives one man may possess are the extent of his resources and his personal taste for becoming the husband of a greater or lesser number of wives.

Since infertile unions are regarded as a punishment of [194] heaven, and since physiological defects are beyond the comprehension of the Laotians, a husband who has no children has two courses between which he can choose:

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1. To repudiate his sterile wife. He must then leave her all their property gains since their marriage and half of their common property;

2. To keep this wife and take a second one.

Recourse is preferably had to the last solution in most cases. By acting thus the husband avoids making restitutions which would often be difficult for him. Moreover, his first wife often persuades him to take a second wife who will be under her orders and almost become her slave.

This is what does happen if the husband has enough money for several wives. They are all under the domination of the first, never sit at the same rank as she and may not wear jewels or clothes which are as rich and sumptuous as hers. They are, in a way, legal concubines.

These secondary wives are ranked in accordance with their date of entry into the polygamous household and are designated as the first wife, second wife, third wife, fourth wife, etc. In the house, except for the times when the husband or master keeps them with him, they are employed as servants for all the household tasks, farming, spinning cotton, weaving cloth, etc.

In the case the first wife should die, and according to the will of the husband, the second wife takes her place and the others advance one notch.

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There is also another very curious type of polygamy which is encouraged by the nomadic habits of the Laotian traveler or trader and which, "utile dulci," yields him profit, security and pleasure. Some natives are, in fact, married at several different places, often quite far from one another and generally situated at the spots where periodic markets are held.

The advantages of this type of polygamy--from the Laotian point of view, of course--are that the husband can have an associate

586 "If a husband remains absent for more than three years without sending news of his whereabouts, a divorce in the wife's favor is legally established. The same period of time and the same conditions are required to break an engagement which has been publicly announced by the parents.

"When a man and wife have had enough of living in common they take leave of one another by dividing their common acquisitions, except for the fact that each one takes back what he brought with him to the marriage. A woman who wants a divorce places a bouquet and two wax candles on the common bed.

"Usually a husband leaves his wife free to separate from him and has recourse to law only to obtain restitution of any part of the common property which his wife may have taken with her illegally.

"A wife who has committed adultery is at the discretion of her husband, who may demand that she be meted out the "Royal Penalty," that is to say either death or life imprisonment. He may also be content with a fine. We should hasten to say that the outraged husband always asks for the fine, which is inflicted on both guilty parties, the adulterous wife and her lover. The fine varies, depending on the region, from 170 to 300 francs.

"If a husband brings three complaints against his wife for adultery with three different persons, he is the one who is punished the third time, for he is considered to be a complaisant husband.

"Relations between unmarried persons are regarded as adulterous.

"A case is also considered adulterous, and punished in the same way, if any man and married woman are surprised alone in an isolated spot or are found talking together in the husband's house with no witnesses present.

"Adultery on the part of the husband is covered by the local law within the general formula which assimilates relations between two unmarried persons to adultery." (Le Laos français.) [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

548 Prostitution. The facilities provided by Laotian customs in the matter of marriage and divorce are such that prostitution does not, so to speak, exist. It is true that a few women are found in the large centers, especially since our settlement in Laos, who are prostitutes or are notoriously known to pursue clandestine prostitution, but this is an exception due solely to the presence of native troops and Oriental "boys" hired as servants [200] by Europeans. These women are,

Tribal Tai 341

Building materials, interior arrangement and furniture in Thai houses do not differ in any significant way from what we have described in connection with the Laotians.

Births. Like the Laotian women, Thai women generally give birth to children with the greatest ease, and the ceremonies accompanying births are identical. 844

Marriages. Betrothals generally take place among the Thais after the farming work is over, in December or January, during the cold season. Sheds are built in the villages. Fires are laid there and the marriageable girls install themselves there with a spinning wheel, reel or cotton gin to keep them busy and prevent them from losing countenance. The young men come and join them and exchange declarations, compliments, betel quids and cigarettes with them. There it is that promises of marriage are made, which are followed by a request to the girl's parents when she gives her lover permission to do so. 584

A few days later, during a banquet which takes place in the girl's house, the engagement is announced and the young [236] people are then free to see one another and come and go together at all hours and in all places.

The marriage is not celebrated until several months after the betrothal unless traces of pregnancy are evident in the engaged girl, in which case the marriage takes place at once.

The ceremony is much simpler than among the Laotians, but it is followed by a series of banquets which succeed one another for several days and at which great quantities of rice brandy and rice beer are consumed. 585

The groom comes to live in his wife's room on his wedding day. He is supposed to stay in the home of his in-laws for eight years (only three years in some regions) and share in their work. 591

Adultery. Divorce. "Cases of adultery are extremely rare. When such an eventuality does occur, the man is condemned to a fine of seven bars of silver (about 260 francs) and the woman to a fine of six bars of the same metal (about 225 francs). Half of these sums is awarded to the judges and the other half to the husband, who may then either take back or repudiate his unfaithful wife. 586 684

"In the latter case, the unfaithful wife generally marries her accomplice.

"Divorce is rarer, but just as easy among the Thais as among 586

586 the Laotians." (Le Laos français.) [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

764 769 Deaths, Funerals. Everything takes place among the Thais as among the Laotians. The poor are buried, while well-to-do people are cremated in great pomp. Celebrations take place at which animal are sacrificed, there is a great deal to eat and quantities of rice brandy and rice beer are consumed. But here there is ancestor worship, and so the altar of the "Phis" of the house and the body itself receive offerings as long as the funeral feasts last.

After cremation, which, as in India, is practiced on a raised pyre at the bottom of a pit dug in the ground, the ashes and burnt bones are sealed in a jar with a few silver coins placed there to pay for the dead person's food during his wanderings through "space."

The jar is buried on the site of the pyre. Then [237] [Illustration] [238] [Blank page] [239] the mattresses, bolster and pillow of the deceased are placed on top, as well as food and a drinking vase full of water. All of his clothes are fastened to poles planted fan-wise on one side of the tomb. Sometimes a fence closes off the site of the tomb.

In some regions the jar containing the remains and ashes of the deceased is buried in a hidden place in the mountains, known only to the dead person's closest relatives.

This procedure, which is not a ritual one, is doubtless intended to place the mortal remains beyond the reach of any profaners of sepulchres who might be attracted by the temptation of the few coins mixed with the ashes.

Finally, a little house is often built over the tomb which is supposed to represent the dwelling place of the deceased.

527 Games, Celebrations, Festivals. Like their Laotian brothers, the Thais are great lovers of celebrations. The chief holiday, one which is celebrated in May or June every year and during which all work ceases for four days, is that of the dead or Boun-Phi-Tai.

782 769 Animal sacrifices are made to the different genii, and are accompanied by prayers in honor of the dead. The favor of each genie or "Phi" spirit is gained by sacrificing a particular animal, as a dog for the "Phi" of tigers, chickens and pigs for the "Phis" of the mountains, a goat for those which watch over the roads leading to watercourses, and buffalo and oxen, finally, for the "Phis" of the

Kha

291 Men's clothing consists of a jacket and pair of trousers which have the same shape as those of the Lus and are made of coarse cotton cloth manufactured locally. Their headgear is a turban cut from a piece of Turkey-red cotton.

For work, clothing is generally reduced to a narrow strip of cloth forming a belt, one of the ends of which is passed between the legs and fastened in the middle of the back.

During the cold season a jacket is added to this loin-cloth.

The women wear a skirt of the Laotian type which is fastened under the armpits so that it does not come down below the calves of the legs. A short jacket completes their costume. On their head they wear a turban which is generally dark in color. [Illustration alongside text here]

301 Jewelry. Both sexes have silver or copper jewelry such as wide stiff neckbands, bracelets, rings, buttons, clasps, etc. Like the Lus and the Youns, the Khas pierce the lobes of their ears. Often the holes are of such dimensions that a roll of leaves or a bouquet of flowers can be inserted in them.

262 Food. Their diet is very like that of the Laotians and Thais. When there is a shortage of rice its place is taken, until the following harvest, by yams, taros, bamboo sprouts, banana flowers, etc.

462 Occupations. Women and children are given the hardest tasks imaginable, and it is unusual to meet them without baskets on their backs. The men carry only their bag, their sword, their rifle and their pipe.

595 Marriage. Divorce. Adultery. Polygamy is widespread among the Khas, and the number of wives a man possesses is the sign of his wealth. For, regarded as they are rather like beasts of burden and working constantly, the more numerous these wives are the more they will produce.

584 [254] The rules for marriage preliminaries closely resemble the Laotian customs and the ceremony itself, although much less splendid, comprises the same rites. To be sure, the role of the bonzes is filled here by "Pho-Tao," that is to say elders or sorcerers.

586 Divorce may be requested by the wife, or one of the wives, for personal reasons. It may also take place by mutual consent. Finally,
684 it is compulsory in the case of adultery, since the guilty woman must marry her accomplice.

Contrary to what is the case elsewhere, adultery on the part of the husband is punished by a double fine awarded to his wife's family

Kha

586 684 and to the family of his accomplice. In a case of flagrante delicto, however, he has the right to kill the guilty parties.

[462] Kha women, when married, are renowned for their austerity, and their conduct is usually exemplary. Moreover, they are very soon disfigured by precocious and repeated childbearing, as well as by the difficult work which they do, and after two or three years of marriage the poor women are no longer tempting to anyone.

764 Deaths. Cremation is not practiced by the Khas. They bury their dead in as summary a fashion as the Lus, and for a few days bring food to the freshly filled grave. Then the latter is abandoned.

When a chief or a rich man is to be buried, the body is placed in a coffin hewn from a tree trunk.

181 Character. Like all oppressed peoples, the Khas are reserved and timid. They are afraid of innovations and new faces. But in intimate gatherings with their own people they are just as merry and love music, dances, celebrations and festivals just as much as the other peoples of Laos.

535 536 Music and dancing. They know certain dances imitated from the Lus, pantomimes (1) which resemble the I-Ke of the Burmese,

(1) They also have the habit of performing scenes in pantomime, rather like extremely primitive ballets. We shall describe one such scene:

"A group of girls, guarded by two respectable men, are pursuing the pleasures of dancing. A rogue comes up and tries to make off with one of the girls. After a few unsuccessful attempts he succeeds in eluding the guards' vigilance, jumps forward to seize the girl on whom he has designs, and clasps her in his arms. But his happiness is too much for him and he falls senseless at the feet of the girl he wanted to abduct." (Le Laos français.) - [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

and [255] singsong legends in which the r's and k's roll out in terrible fashion. 533 They also have songs which they accompany on flutes, clarinets and single-stringed violins. Some tribes have xylophones, these being instruments composed of bamboo tubes of [Illustration here] different thickness and length, each of which produces a tone varying with its size. It will be seen that by striking with a [256] stick of wood on these tubes, a combination of more or less harmonious sounds will

Hill Tribes

Almost all are of low birth and are crude and illiterate. They have married Thai or Kha women and thereby founded a stock of halfbreeds. This race is destined to merge with the mass of the Laotians or Thai population and through successive crossings lose all distinctive characteristics.

The Meos. The Meos are also Yunnanese who have retained a degree of independence and have not been marked with the Chinese imprint like the Hos or adopted baggy clothes and the custom of wearing their hair only in a braid.

They are distributed in groups of a few families each of which live on the peaks of the mountains in northern Laos and the Sib-Song Chau-Thais. They can be divided into three great families--the blacks, the whites and the reds--which owe their names to the color of certain parts of the women's costume. Thus among the black and red Meos skirts or jackets are light blue in color, but the latter have a wide collar ornamented with black or red embroidery. Finally, a small turban with black and white checks or of red material, depending on the case, completes their garb. Among the white Meos, the women wear a skirt and jacket of unbleached cloth, with a white and blue embroidered collar.

The men's clothing is light blue in all cases. It is composed of a broad pair of trousers which come down somewhat below the calf, where the legs are drawn tight, and of a short, tight-sleeved jacket which buttons down one side.

A turban winds around the head and covers their long hair, which may be rolled or braided.

The women's hair is parted and wound on the upper part of the nape of the neck in a coil. (1)

(1) See Appendix XIX.

The Meos practice ancestor worship primarily, like many Asian peoples. They have no pagodas or bonzes, but elders perform the office of priests and also administer justice.

[268] The Meos bury their dead, and make animal sacrifices on the occasion of births, marriages and deaths so as to gain the favor of the "Phis" or multiple and varied genii in whose existence and influence they believe.

Marriage is as simple as among the other peoples of Laos.

Divorce may occur either through mutual consent or in the case of adultery.